

O 261151Z MAR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9662  
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMEMBASSY DHAKA  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
AMCONSUL CHENNAI  
AMCONSUL MUMBAI  
AMCONSUL TORONTO  
USEU BRUSSELS  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
USMISSION GENEVA  
HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
DIA WASHINGTON DC  
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//  
CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//

UNCLAS COLOMBO 000342

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER, CAMP), SCA/INS AND PRM  
STATE ALSO PASS USAID  
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)  
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)  
ATHENS FOR PCARTER  
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)  
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)  
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)  
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)  
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY  
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 40

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E) Colombo 310 F) Colombo 307 G) Colombo 304 H) Colombo 299 I)  
Colombo 294 J) Colombo 287 K) Colombo 282

1. (U) Summary: The Foreign Minister summoned the UN Resident Coordinator to defend the UN's much publicized civilian casualty figures; the UN continues to stand by its estimate of 2,683 dead and over 7,000 injured from January 20-March 5. On March 30, the UN World Food Program (WFP) will load the next major food shipment destined for the conflict zone onto a ship. End Summary.

Government Questions UN Casualty Estimates  
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2. (U) As reported in the Sri Lankan press and on the Ministry of Defense website, Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama and Foreign Secretary Dr. Palitha Kohona met with UN Resident Coordinator Neil Buhne on March 25 to protest widely publicized UN estimates of civilian casualties in the conflict zone (2,683 killed, over 7,000 injured from January 20 to March 5). The Defense website headlined its coverage, "UN Resident Coordinator Unable to Vouch for Civilian Casualty Figures." The Resident Coordinator continues to stand behind these figures as the best estimate available.

Next Major Food Shipment  
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3. (U) The Vin-Tan captain has refused to take any more food or other cargo by sea from Trincomalee to the Mullaitivu conflict area due to the security risks to the vessel. The Government has contracted with another large capacity ship, the Dublin. WFP will begin loading 1,030 MTs of food on March 30. As is usual procedure for aid shipments to the conflict zone, the vessel will fly the ICRC

flag.

¶4. (U) Movement of supplies to the conflict area was discussed in a March 26 logistics meeting in Colombo that included representatives from WFP, the Commissioner General of Essential Services, and the Ministry of Nation Building. An NGO consortium in Vavuniya had requested WFP to facilitate a shipment from Vavuniya of approximately 200 MTs of complementary food with its sea shipment of dry rations; however, the Government has instructed that non-WFP food supplies remain in Vavuniya for the new arrivals. (Note: as WFP does not lack food supplies for its shipments to the conflict area, this seems to be a reasonable instruction.)

#### Civilian Casualties and Outflow

¶5. (U) The Sri Lankan Army reported 1,386 civilians reached Government-controlled territory on March 24. The Government further reports that according to fleeing civilians, LTTE cadres fired upon them to prevent their escape. Unconfirmed reports indicate shelling continued in the Government-designated "safe zone" on March 25. WFP reports beneficiary figure for internally displaced persons reached a total of 51,961 persons on March 25, with 44,823 in Vavuniya transit sites.

¶6. (SBU) Tamil sources from within the LTTE-controlled area report 112 civilians were killed, including 25 children, and 210 injured on March 25. (Note: Such reports from Tamil sources cannot be confirmed and are frequently exaggerated.) No reports were received from Tamil sources regarding arrivals into Government-controlled territory on March 24-25.

BLAKE